

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L EC BRUSSELS 7406

FOR: DALE GOOD, S/IL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, ICFTU

SUBJECT: ICFTU LEADERS HOPE TO SEE MEANY IN WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK

1. SUMMARY: ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY KERSTEN AND ASSISTANT
GENERAL SECRETARY VANDERVECKEN WILL BE IN WASHINGTON
SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 3. THE OFFICIAL PURPOSE OF THEIR TRIP
IS TO ATTEND INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND MEETINGS, BUT
SEPARATE COVERSATIONS WITH BOTH LEADERS INDICATE THAT
THEIR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IN WASHINGTON WILL BE TO MEET WITH
GEORGE MEANY AND OTHER AFL-CIO LEADERS WITH THE HOPE OF
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INITIATING AN ICFTU-AFL-CIO DIALOG. ON OCTOBER 4 THE

TWO LEADERS ARE SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH UN SECRETARY-GENERAL WALDHEIM AND OTHER UN OFFICIALS IN NEW YORK TO DISCUSS MULTI-NATIONAL COMPANIES. END SUMMARY.

2. KERSTEN AND VANDERVECKEN WILL ARRIVE WASHINGTON AT 1900 HOURS SEPTEMBER 29 VIA NA 403. THEY WILL STAY AT THE SHOREHAM AMERICANA HOTEL. WHILE THE OFFICIAL PURPOSE OF THEIR MISSION IS TO ATTEND IMF MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON AND TO DISCUSS MNC'S AT THE UN, THEIR FOUR-DAY VISIT TO WASHINGTON SHOULD BE VIEWED AS A SIGNIFICANT EFFORT BY THE ICFTU SECRETARIAT TOWARD REESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH THE AFL-CIO. KERSTEN HAS SENT LETTERS REQUESTING APPOINTMENTS WITH AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MEANY AND WITH THE NATIONAL PRESIDENTS OF SEVERAL KEY UNIONS INCLUDING THE UNITED MINE WORKERS, RETAIL CLERKS, PLUMBERS AND PIPE-FITTERS, UNITED STEELWORK, UNITED AUTOWORKERS AND INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS. A DINNER MEETING WITH HOUSEWRIGHT OF THE RETAIL CLERKS HAS BEEN CONFIRMED FOR SEPTEMBER 30.

3. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE, BOTH LEADERS STRESSED THE OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A MEETING WITH GEORGE MEANY. IN DOING SO, THEY ALLUDED TO UNFORTUNATE PAST EXPERIENCES WHEN FORMER ICFTU LEADERS ATTEMPTED TO CIRCUMVENT MEANY IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS. KERSTEN SAID THIS WAS ONE OF THE ROOT CAUSES OF AFL-CIO DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE ICFTU AND THAT FOR THIS REASON HE WANTS TO DISCUSS MATTERS DIRECTLY WITH MEANY. KERSTEN IS A PRAGMATIST AND AS SUCH DOES NOT EXPECT AN EARLY RETURN OF THE AFL-CIO TO THE ICFTU FOLD. HE IS HOPEFUL, HOWEVER, THAT AN OPEN DIALOG BETWEEN THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS WHICH COULD LEAD TO SUCH A DEVELOPMENT CAN BE INITIATED AS A RESULT OF HIS EFFORTS IN WASHINGTON.

4. COMMENT: THE CREATION LAST YEAR OF ANAUTONOMOUS EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION WHICH NOW COUNTS THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED ITALIAN CGIE AND OTHER NON-ICFTU NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTERS AMONG ITS AFFILIATES, AND THE VIRTUAL EXCLUSION OF THE ICFTU FROM DELIBERATIONS
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LEADING TO INCREASED CONTACTS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS, HAVE SERIOUSLY ERODED THE ICFTU'S INFLUENCE AND POSITION AS AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION. THE ICFTU IS IN A SERIOUS STHAT OF DECLINE AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REMAIN SO UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE AFL-CIO RETURNS, IF EVER. UNFORTUNATELY, THE DIFFERENCES WHICH LED TO THE AFL-CIO'S DEPARTURE, PARTICULARLY THOSE PERTAINING TO RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST UNIONS, ARE MORE PRONOUNCED

TODAY THAN SIX YEARS AGO. IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT KERSTEN COMES TO WASHINGTON.

5. VERY FEW OF THE ICFTU EUROPEAN LEADERS WHO ARE ADVOCATING AFL-CIO REENTRY DO SO IN THE BELIEF THAT THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE AFL-CIO WILL REVERSE THE PRESENT TREND OF ESCALATING EAST-WEST CONTACTS. IN FACT, THE VAST MAJORITY OF THEM VIEW THE EVOLUTION OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS AS THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCE OF THE WORLD'S TRANSITION FROM AN ERA OF COLD WAR CONFRONTATION TO ONE OF DETENTE. WHAT DOES CAUSE THEM SERIOUS CONCERN IS THE HIGH STATE OF POLITICAL DISARRAY OF WEST EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS AND THE LACK OF ANY COORDINATED APPROACH TO EAST-WEST RELATIONS WHICH THEY BELIEVE CONCEDES TO THE SOVIETS AN UNNECESSARY AND HAZARDOUS ADVANTAGE.

6. THESE ICFTU LEADERS ARE CONVINCED THAT THE ONLY VIABLE MECHANISM FOR RECTIFYING THIS CONDITION IS A REVITALIZED ICFTU WHICH WOULD BE CAPABLE OF TAKING THE QUESTION OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS OUT OF A PURELY REGIONAL EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK AND GIVING IT GLOBAL DIMENSIONS. A SCENARIO BEGINNING TO MAKE THE ROUNDS IN BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CIRCLES ENVISAGES UNIONS SUCH AS THE GERMAN DGB, FRENCH FO AND DANISH LO WORKING IN CONCERT WITH THE LEADERS OF ICFTU AFFILIATED UNIONS IN ASIA, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE SKEPTICAL OF SOVIET INTENTIONS AND WOULD SUPPORT INITIATIVES TO RESHAPE THE COURSE OF EAST-WEST DEVELOPMENTS. THE VERY DEARTH OF ALTERNATIVES TO SUCH A SCENARIO GIVES IT SOME VALIDITY. SELLING IT TO GEORGE MEANY IS SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN, BUT THIS APPEARS TO BE THE OBJECT OF KERSTEN'S VISIT NEXT WEEK. MYERSON

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